



ILLINOIS FAMILIES Now and Forever

Families by Foster Care, Adoption and Guardianship®

Department of Children and Family Services®



From the DCFS Director

Bryan Samuels

As we embark upon a new year, it is appropriate to express appreciation for foster families who fill a huge role in the lives of thousands of children, and for my colleagues at DCFS who work to strengthen the child welfare system in Illinois.

Thinking about the people who work hard throughout the year to make life better for kids renews my commitment to them and the process of finding better ways for us to do our jobs. It also reinforces my belief that we have made progress.

Still, as an agency, we have to ask ourselves: How does the past inform the future of child welfare in Illinois? My response is to 1) ensure the changes we are implementing will penetrate deeply into the practices of the department; 2) ensure that each child receives a quality and complete plan for their entire stay in state care and beyond; and 3) display the commitment and obtain the tools to fulfill society's obligation to provide for these children. With those goals, I believe 2006 holds the promise of many good things for youth and their families.

DCFS provides help in planning and paying for higher education

Now is the time for caregivers and students to make final plans for moving on to higher education. DCFS can offer assistance and resources for young people interested in four-year universities, community colleges and vocational programs. Below is a snapshot of programs and sources of information. Further, the Office of Education and Transition Services (OETS) has assigned Transition Managers to each region, who can help sort out the educational options. DCFS Education Advisors in the regions are also available to assist families, including adoptive and guardianship families. To find the transition manager or Education Advisor in your area, contact OETS at 312-814-5959.

FAFSA

The most critical component is the Free Application for Federal Student Aid Forms (FAFSA). It is important that each youth complete and mail or email their applications as early as possible, in order to secure the maximum benefits. Forms can be secured from their school counselor or via the Internet. All assistance based on financial need requires filling out the FAFSA.

When it comes to youth in foster care or guardianship families, the major determining factor is the student's status as *dependent* or *independent*. The FAFSA will ask if the applicant is currently a ward of the court or if the applicant was a ward until age 18. Youth in foster care or guardianship should answer YES. Youth who were adopted before age 18 must answer NO. A YES answer will consider the youth to be an independent student, which means their parent's income will not be included in the financial need formula. Adoptive parents' income will be included, unless special circumstances apply. After filling out and returning the application, the student will receive the Student Aid Report (SAR) that lists the Expected Family Contribution (EFC), which is what the family is expected to pay on top of any aid.

DCFS Scholarships

DCFS annually provides 48 college scholarships to youth who are currently under guardianship of the Department or who have left Department guardianship

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higher education, con't.

through adoption or private guardianship arrangements. Scholarship recipients receive up to four consecutive years of tuition and academic fee waivers to be used at participating Illinois state colleges or universities, a monthly stipend and a medical card.

The purpose of the program is to ensure that those selected have the opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree in four years or less. Applicants must have a high school diploma or GED by the end of the current school year. Scholarship Program Student Applications (CFS 438) are routinely due March 31 and award announcements occur by mid-May.

Community College Tuition Assistance

DCFS, via a contract with the Illinois Community College Board, will pay the tuition for youth in care who attend an Illinois community college when tuition cannot be covered through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) process. DCFS youth are eligible to utilize four semesters of tuition payments. Under this contract, community colleges can provide other supportive services necessary to ensure a successful education experience for the student. Such services may include: career selection, financial aid advising, placement services, and tutoring.

Education and Training Voucher

The Office of Education and Transition Services administers the Education and Training Voucher Program (ETV). The voucher is for a one-time payment up to \$5,000 to fund educational expenses, tuition, room and board, books, and supplies not covered by financial aid.

These Internet sites have information on selecting colleges, preparing the applications and financial aid. They can be valuable tools in helping students make decisions and secure resources for further education.

www.fafsa.ed.gov
www.collegezone.org
www.collegeboard.org
www.act.org
www.fastweb.com

To be eligible for the program, youth in care or formerly in care must be:

- 16 – 22 years old
- Attending a public/private four-year university, junior college, or a one-year vocational training program (in or out of state)
- Moved to adoption or guardianship after age 16

Youth who meet the criteria should request and complete the Education and Training Voucher Application and Agree-

ment form with the ETV Academic Plan. Contact The Office of Education and Transition Services at 309-693-5150 or 5415 N. University Street, Room 103 Peoria, IL 61614.

Community consultants

Introspect is a community-based agency that can advise students on how to pick a college, discover financial aid resources and assist with the application process all the way through the doctoral level. The agency is located in Chicago and focuses on Cook County, but can also advise youth around the state. The organization primarily serves youth in care. However, young people who aged out of the system, left through adoption or guardianship, and even those who had never been in care can also receive assistance. For more information, contact Bernard Clay at 773-287-2290.

A second program called Project Success focuses on helping adults 19 or older attend the college of their choice. The program's service area includes Chicago and the south suburbs. Project Success targets students from low-income households who are the first in the family to go to college. Yet, the organization also can assist students in other circumstances. Project Success can provide career counseling, college search services, and financial aid counseling. To get a referral packet for the program, call 773-995-2371. Project Success also does presentations to groups of young people or the adults who support them.

2006 Reader Survey

Please help us make sure *Families Now and Forever* offers what you want to know. After circling your answers on **both** sides, simply fold, seal and mail the survey back. Or visit the DCFS web site at www.state.il.us/dcfs to fill it out on-line. You may also fax both sides to 312-814-4131. Thank you in advance for your input.

CIRCLE: 1=GREAT interest 2=SOME interest 3=NO interest X=NOT applicable

Working Within the Child Welfare System

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 2 3 X Foster care rules/procedures | 1 2 3 X Child and family teams |
| 1 2 3 X Adoption rules/procedures | 1 2 3 X Confidentiality |
| 1 2 3 X Guardianship rules/procedures | 1 2 3 X System of care service network |
| 1 2 3 X Governmental rules/legislation | 1 2 3 X Integrated assessments |
| 1 2 3 X Licensing policy | 1 2 3 X Intake/Child investigation process |
| 1 2 3 X Obligations of foster parents | 1 2 3 X Juvenile Court |
| 1 2 3 X Recruiting foster/adopt families | 1 2 3 X Resolving DCFS/agency disputes |
| other topics/comments: _____ | |

Adoption and Guardianship

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 2 3 X Financial implications | 1 2 3 X Subsidy agreement |
| 1 2 3 X Advocating for the adopted child | 1 2 3 X Rights and responsibilities |
| 1 2 3 X Obtaining community resources | 1 2 3 X Accessing free post-adopt services |
| other topics/comments: _____ | |

Medical and Mental Health

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| 1 2 3 X Depression | 1 2 3 X Developmental disabilities |
| 1 2 3 X Attachment disorders | 1 2 3 X Medically-fragile children |
| 1 2 3 X Eating disorders | 1 2 3 X Sexual abuse |
| 1 2 3 X Self-esteem | 1 2 3 X Resources for medical specialties |
| 1 2 3 X Fetal alcohol/drug exposure | 1 2 3 X Resources/info for dental services |
| 1 2 3 X Asthma | 1 2 3 X Resources for mental health |
| 1 2 3 X Diabetes | 1 2 3 X Using the Public Aid medical card |
| other topics/comments: _____ | |

Education

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1 2 3 X Working with schools/teachers | 1 2 3 X Tutoring |
| 1 2 3 X Special education services | 1 2 3 X DCFS Education Advocates |
| 1 2 3 X Scholarships | 1 2 3 X Education after high school |
| other topics/comments: _____ | |

Age-related Topics

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 2 3 X Early childhood intervention | 1 2 3 X Independent Living |
| 1 2 3 X Tantrums, biting, aggression | 1 2 3 X Services for teens |
| 1 2 3 X Safety (home, playground, school) | 1 2 3 X Housing for transitioning teens |
| 1 2 3 X Pre-teen sexuality | 1 2 3 X Youth Advisory Boards |
| 1 2 3 X Teen sexuality | 1 2 3 X Runaways |
| other topics/comments: _____ | |

Family Life

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1 2 3 X Behavior management/discipline | 1 2 3 X Foster/adoptive family networking |
| 1 2 3 X Sibling rivalry | 1 2 3 X Family traditions/activities |
| 1 2 3 X Impact of placement changes | 1 2 3 X Camps |
| 1 2 3 X Handling stress | 1 2 3 X Arts, music, sports activities |
| 1 2 3 X Family therapy/counseling | 1 2 3 X Travel |
| 1 2 3 X Self-care for parents | 1 2 3 X Free services, products |
| other topics/comments: _____ | |

SPRING 2006 CAREGIVERS REGIONAL TRAINING INSTITUTES

DCFS Division of Clinical Services and Professional Development

Effecting Transitions for Youth in Care – Resources for Caregivers and Youth

The 2006 Caregivers Regional Training Institutes will focus on working together through changes with training delivered in six interactive sessions:

Enhancing Relationships to Improve Permanency Planning Between Caregivers and Adolescents in Care: Testimonials from youth and their caregivers will illustrate how strong relationships help young people as they strive toward adulthood.

The Lifetime Approach to Child Welfare Case Management—Strategic Direction for Illinois DCFS and its Caregivers: DCFS executive staff will explain several new initiatives to respond to the changing needs of youth in care and their caregivers.

The Caregiver Role in Service Planning Toward Permanency: Caregivers can amplify their voice as they advocate for youth through initiatives such as the Integrated Assessment program, the Child and Youth Investment Teams (CAYIT) and advisory councils.

Caregiver Planning for Educational Advocacy: Education Advisors from the area will discuss changes to special education policies and new programs to ensure that youth and caregivers have positive school outcomes.

Self-Sufficiency and Lifeskills Development—The Power of Relationships: Caregivers will learn how to help youth discover their personal assets and add powerful, practical life skills for adulthood.

Service Planning for Post-Secondary Education and Employment: There are many resources available to help youth (and their caregivers) prepare for college and/or employment so they can eventually stand on their own. The session will also highlight programs for youth on various permanency paths.

Rend Lake Resort, Whittington
February 18

Clocktower Resort, Rockford
March 25

Northfield Suites, Springfield
February 25

Pere Marquette Hotel, Peoria
April 8

Hawthorne Suites, Champaign
March 4

Hampton Inn & Suites, Aurora
April 29

Four Points Sheraton,
Fairview Heights ~ March 11

DCFS – 1911 S. Indiana, Chicago
May 6

DCFS – 6201 S. Emerald, Chicago
March 18

Institutes held from 8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Meals will be provided.
There are no provisions for children to attend.

**Register today! Call the Department of Children
and Family Services Registration Unit ~ 877-800-3393**

Who do you call when...

A child in your home is having a psychiatric crisis that may require hospitalization?

Call the CARES line at 800-345-9049. However, if a child is a danger to himself or others, call 911 first. The CARES line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

...You feel you aren't being treated fairly by DCFS or a private agency?

After you've tried to resolve the issue with the caseworker and supervisors, then call the Advocacy Office at 800-232-3798.

...You need to report a child missing or have information about a youth who has run away?

To report information on missing youth call 866-503-0184, 24 hours a day seven days a week.

...You have questions about your board check?

Call DCFS Central Payment Unit at 800-525-0499 if your check comes from DCFS. Contact your private agency for other payments.

...You have questions about your child's medical card?

Call 800-228-6533.

...You need resources or services for a child after adoption or guardianship?

If you live in Cook County, call the Cook County Post Adoption and Guardianship Unit at 866-538-8892. Outside of Cook, call the adoption worker in the DCFS regional office.

...You are having a family crisis with your adopted child

Contact the Adoption Preservation Program that serves your area. The Post-Adoption Guardianship Information Line (800-572-2390) can help make the connection to the appropriate agency.

...You have an idea for an article in the newsletter?

Each region has a reporter to help gather local news. They are typically listed in the regional section of each edition. Or you can contact the Editor, Vanessa James.

Add your Support Group to the 2006 listing

If you lead a support group for foster or adoptive families, you can be included in the support group listing coming in May. Please send the following information to Vanessa James, Editor, by March 1.

- Name of group
- Meeting schedule and location
- Contact Person and his or her phone number
- Any other notes: e.g. focus on international adoptions

E-mail: vjames@idcfs.state.il.us

Post: 100 W. Randolph , 6th Floor, Chicago, IL 60601



***Illinois Families
Now and Forever***

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Purpose: To help busy families more effectively parent children currently or formerly in DCFS care. To bring them the best information from the most knowledgeable sources. To promote statewide teamwork in finding permanency for children.

Address Changes: Families must notify their licensing representative, who will notify DCFS. Agencies should change office addresses or request staff copies through the Editor.

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A family for me

Tyler [7495] Tyler, 13, is a smart young man with great academic talent. He consistently gets good grades in school and is well liked by the teachers and the other students. After school, Tyler plays sports and participates in band. He also enjoys playing video games and going bowling with friends when he has free time.

His teachers said that Tyler works hard to please them. His worker said Tyler very much wants to be part of a family. The family for Tyler can be loving, patient, and flexible. Tyler said he'd like to join a family with a mom and a dad. He hopes to live in a rural area.

Niya [7490] Niya, 11, is a sweet young lady with a wonderful sense of humor and great social skills. She has lots of friends and loves to spend time with them. Niya does a good job of listening to adults. In class, she is a hard-working student who enjoys learning. At home, she likes to read, play ball, and pretend with dolls. Because of a medical condition, Niya sometimes has difficulty walking, and occasionally needs assistance. She is eleven years old.

Her foster parent and her teacher said that Niya has a charming

personality and loves to have fun. Her worker said Niya values her independence, and she thrives on attention and affection. The family for her can be loving and nurturing with Niya. You can provide her with a safe and stable home environment.

Mark [7380] Mark, 14, is a friendly young man who loves to play competitive sports. He especially enjoys basketball and last year was a member of his school's basketball team. Mark is very aware of what's going on in the world around him, and he enjoys staying current with the latest trends in music and clothing. When he has free time, he likes to play video games or go bowling with friends. Adults report that Mark is doing a nice job of maturing and has become very good at expressing his thoughts and feelings.

His worker said Mark visits his brothers regularly and cares very deeply about them. He would like to maintain a relationship with them after he is adopted. Potential parents for Mark could give him lots of love and attention, and you can be patient and encouraging of his interests. Mark would prefer to be adopted by a family in the southern Illinois area so he can remain in close contact with his brothers.

Brandon [6906] Brandon, 13, loves the stereo and TV in his home. He enjoys listening to classical radio stations and Christian worship CDs. He also likes watching Veggie Tales and Disney videos, as long as they're not too scary. When he's not busy with these activities, Brandon enjoys playing with toys that light up and make noise. His favorite toy is a spinning top that says numbers and plays music.

At mealtime, he likes to serve himself finger foods like chicken nuggets or pieces of a peanut butter sandwich. Because of a medical condition, Brandon uses a wheelchair for mobility. He doesn't speak, but he smiles at people he recognizes, and he vocalizes enthusiastically when music is playing.

His foster mother said Brandon is a "smiley guy" who likes being around people. The parent for Brandon would be loving, patient, and kind with him. You can be energetic and willing to make a long-term commitment to his care.

If you are interested in adopting one of these children or learning about other children waiting to be adopted, please call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois at 1-800-572-2390, or see the AICI web site – www.adoptinfo-il.org.

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DO YOU KNOW A FAMILY FOR ME?

Call the Adoption Information Center of Illinois 800-572-2390.



Register Now for the 2006 Caregivers Institutes

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